

# A MATERIAL CULTURE PERSPECTIVE ON THE CAPITALIZATION OF ROȘIA MONTANĂ ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE (ROMANIA) BY THE ROȘIA MONTANĂ GOLD CORPORATION

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**Abstract:** By taking as an example an abandoned house from Roșia Montană (Alba County, Romania), this photographic essay is a critique of the capitalization of the village architectural heritage by the Roșia Montană Gold Corporation (RMGC) – a private mining company interested in the resources of the region. I sustain that RMGC promotes and implements a disembodied perspective on the houses, people and landscape, thus erasing the memory of those who once lived at Roșia Montană.

**Rezumat:** Luând ca exemplu o casă abandonată din Roșia Montană (județul Alba, România), acest eseu fotografic este o critică a valorificării patrimoniului arhitectural de către Roșia Montană Gold Corporation (R.M.G.C.) – o companie minieră privată interesată de resursele în regiune. Susțin că R.M.G.C. promovează și implementează o perspectivă dezîntrupată asupra caselor, oamenilor și peisajului, ștergând în acest fel memoria acelor care cândva au locuit la Roșia Montană.



Fig. 1. Roșia Montană, September 2011: overview (photo: Radu-Alexandru Dragoman).

Roșia Montană is a village located in the Apuseni Mountains in Transylvania (Alba County), at 700-900 m altitude, where, since the Antiquity, the main activity of the inhabitants was mining. After the fall of the communist regime in 1989, the mining activity continued for a while, but the human life was severely affected due to the general economic deterioration of Romania. Following the adoption of a pro-capitalist discourse and the transition to the market economy, the state mining at Roșia Montană was classified as hopelessly unprofitable. Gradually, the mining exploitations were closed, leading to the lower incomes of the

residents and the increase of the migration to urban areas, in search of a better standard of living.<sup>1</sup> In this context, in 1997, the Gabriel Resources Company, whose shares on the date on which I wrote these lines were owned by 80% by investors in the United States, has focused on the mineral deposits of Roșia Montană and founded the company Euro Gold Resources SA, renamed in 2000 Roșia Montană Gold Corporation (RMGC); in the latter company, the Gabriel Resources has become the main shareholder, with over 80% of shares.<sup>2</sup> Two years later, Euro Gold Resources SA/RMGC, obtained the license for the exploitation of the gold and silver deposits in the area of the locality and initiated the necessary steps to start a large mining project.<sup>3</sup> On the RMGC's website, in commercials or TV shows, the mining project was presented by its promoters as extremely beneficial for the locals, affected by the unemployment following the closure of the state mines from the communist period and, also for the entire country, affected by the "global crisis" started in 2008: RMGC promoted/promotes the message that it will create thousands of jobs, will provide generous salaries, will create favorable conditions for the business development in the area, will create a modern infrastructure,

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<sup>1</sup> Vulpe *et al.* 2011, pp. 29-30, 103.

<sup>2</sup> RMGC's official website: <http://www.rmgc.ro/>; accessed: 23 November 2011.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem.*